



# Australian Bureau of Statistics

## 2055.0 - Australian Census Analytic Program: The Micro-Dynamics of Change in Australian Agriculture: 1976-2001, 2001

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### Fewer and fewer young farmers

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Since 1976 the number of farmers aged in their 20s have declined by over 60%, according to a new study based on 2001 Census data released today.

The study, by Dr Neil Barr from the Victorian Department of Primary Industries examines the changing entry and exit behaviour of farmers of different ages and different agricultural industries.

There was a rapid decline in the rate of young people becoming farmers during the 1970s and 1980s. Entry of young people into agriculture seems to have stabilised at new low levels. Approximately 3,300 people aged under 25 years became farmers between 1996 and 2001.

Exit rates from agriculture continued to decline between 1996 and 2001, particularly for women and older people. It appears an increasing number of farmers are choosing to continue to farm on grazing enterprises in the absence of a next generation interested in taking over the business. This has led to an increase in the median age of farmers. The median age of farmers increased from 48 to 50 years during the years 1996 to 2001.

These trends are more pronounced in some industries and landscapes than others. The dairy and cropping industries have maintained relatively young and stable age profile, while farmers in the beef industry are older.

Projections developed in the study suggest the ageing of the farm population will peak within 10 years, if exit and entry patterns to farming remain as they have been over the last 15 years.

ABS Director of Census Products and Services, Michael Beahan, said this report was issued under the Australian Census Analytic Program (ACAP). The program provides opportunities for bona fide researchers to access confidentialised census data for in-depth reviews. It highlights the value of census data in examining social issues within Australia.

Further details are in **Australian Census Analytic Program: The Micro-Dynamics of Change in Australian Agriculture: 1976-2001** (cat. no. 2055.0).

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